

1 Peter 3:8-12

1Pe 3:8 (NKJV) **Finally, all of you be of one mind, having compassion for one another; love as brothers, be tenderhearted, be courteous; ⁹ not returning evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary blessing, knowing that you were called to this, that you may inherit a blessing. ¹⁰ For "He who would love life And see good days, Let him refrain his tongue from evil, And his lips from speaking deceit. ¹¹ Let him turn away from evil and do good; Let him seek peace and pursue it. ¹² For the eyes of the LORD are on the righteous, And His ears are open to their prayers; But the face of the LORD is against those who do evil."**

This morning we begin the study of v10-12 which is a quote from a couple of Old Testament passages. As we go through this passage, there is one hermeneutical issue with the verbs, so we will have to drill through some of the grammatical rock to come to the right way to handle these verses. The passage begins with the word **“for”** (*“gar”*) – a fairly innocuous and innocent word to us most of the time. However, what the particle **“for”** does is assign a reason to something that is used in an explanation, an argument, or an intensification of a particular idea.¹ It is called a causative particle and always comes after a clause or passage to begin an explanation of the reason for what was just previously stated or implied in the previous passage. We could just as easily use the word **“because”**. Everything that we have studied in v8-9 are incredibly practical injunctions – nothing difficult, nothing unusual, nothing problematic to someone who is actually committed to God’s will for their life – **“be of one mind, having compassion for one another; love as brothers, be tenderhearted, be courteous”** and **“not returning evil for evil or reviling for reviling”**.

So, as he begins v10, Peter is making an assumption that those people to whom he is speaking want to **“love life and to see good days”**. In the Greek Interlinear it reads **“the one wanting to love life and to see good days”**. It implies that this person deeply desires this for their life. The NASB actually uses the word **“desires”** and the AMP says **“who wants to enjoy”**. The believer has been granted the legacy to enjoy his life.² Jesus said in [John10:10](#),

Jn 10:10 (NKJV) **The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.**

We have already addressed this part of the passage and we came to the conclusion that everybody wants that in their life. I do not personally know anyone who wants to live a miserable life. They want to love what they are doing and they want to see good days. I received this message from one of my international students the other day and this is what he said – *“I not feel good. Sometimes is very much problems with my parents, with the people, with the life, and my soul is empty”*. My heart just broke for this young man because he is so genuine and such a precious young believer, but he lives in a very difficult place that is constantly challenging everything that he believes in and lives for in his life. What he was saying to me is that he wants to **“love life and to see good days”**.

What Peter is doing, though, is simply reiterating to his audience that if we as believers are truly going to be able to love what God desires to do in our life and to see the kind of days that He is willing to bless,

¹ Strong, #1063, *gar*, 1021.

² Precept, *1 Peter 3:8-12, verse by verse*, ep.

then we have critical spiritual responsibilities to help ensure that happens. He has already given us seven specific areas that we are to address in our life in v8-9, and now he is going to add on to that list with the following six areas that we are implement into our life: “*Let him refrain his tongue from evil, and (refrain) his lips from speaking deceit.¹¹ *Let him turn away from evil and (let him) do good; let him seek peace and (let him) pursue it (peace).*”*

So exactly what does Peter mean when he says that we are to “**refrain**” from doing certain things? The word “**refrain**” is the Greek word “*pauro*” and it means to stop, to quit, to cease, to leave, to bring something to an end. The nuance of the meaning is that this is the normal tendency that we all often have – of not controlling what we say. If you are someone who truly wants to enjoy your life, then you must learn how to control your tongue. [James 3:6](#) aptly provides a description of how damaging the tongue can be when it says,

Jas 3:6 (NKJV) And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity. The tongue is so set among our members that it defiles the whole body, and sets on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire by hell.

It is never any fun to be around people who simply cannot control their tongue and what they say and how they speak to people. The tendency that many people have is to just blurt out what they want to say without any forethought of how those words may impact someone else. Controlling our tongue is an act of the will, a premeditated decision as to how we are going to live. It is crucial to loving life and seeing good days.

What makes this passage difficult is that the word “**refrain**” is an aorist tense, imperative mood, active voice verb which is that very unusual verb parsing that Peter uses throughout his writings. It is not possible to give someone a command to do something in the past. However, the unique construction of the verb causes it to become the primary verb for the passage, and normally every other verb in the passage is there to simply complement the verb with this parsing, in this case “**refrain**”. It is Peter’s way of drawing attention to what it is that we as believer’s must do in order to experience God’s blessing on our life. Just think of it for a moment. Who would want to bless someone who is always speaking evil, who is deceitful, who is always involved in something evil, who is not doing anything good, and could care less about being at peace with other people? No one would want to bless someone who has no intention of stopping these things in their life, but actually persists and continues in them. Because the word “**refrain**” is in the active voice, it means that the believer is the one that is responsible for refraining his tongue from speaking evil or from saying deceitful things. Think of “voice” as that part of the verb that determines its force and its strength. So, when a verb is in the active voice, it has a much stronger force to it than does the passive voice or the middle voice. Stated another way, it places the responsibility on the believer.

However, just to make this a little more difficult technically, all of the verbs in v11 for “**let him turn away**”, for “**let him seek**”, and for let him “**pursue**”, they all are also in the imperative mood, aorist tense, active voice. This is about as unusual of a set up for verbs as a teacher could have to evaluate. It is as if Peter wants all of these verbs to be the emphasis. It is like he is struggling to give a priority to one over the other, so he just makes them all in this unusual verb tense. There may be another place in the New Testament where this occurs, but I am not aware that there is. Stated another way, it is like Peter is just adamant about what he is saying. He is using language where his readers would have

understood the intensity and the force and the weight of these verbs. It is almost as if the point that he is making is to reinforce what he says in v12 – that **“the face of the Lord is against those who do evil”**. He wants his readers to clearly understand that if they truly want God’s blessing on their life, that it means that they personally have to understand every single one of these commands and take them seriously. If they choose to simply ignore them, which happens all the time, then God considers it to actually be something evil, and His **“face...is against”** that individual.

In the Greek Interlinear it translates the first phrase this way – **“let him stop his tongue from speaking evil”**. The word **“him”** is not actually in the Greek text, but simply is the way that the word **“refrain”** or **“stop”** is translated because it is in the active voice to emphasize that the subject is responsible for the action. It is emphasizing that the believer is the one responsible for stopping, for quitting, and for ceasing certain activities in their life. No one will do this for you. If you find yourself saying inappropriate things about people or saying things that are deceitful, then God commands you as a believer to stop, to refrain from doing so. If God commands you to do it, then He will not do it for you. It is His expectation as to how we are going to respond to His Word. This has to become the believer’s mindset, his attitude towards his life, and how he thinks. How we think will govern how we live. If you see someone who claims to be a Christian, but who is indifferent, uninterested, and unmoved with spiritual things and biblical truth, they have no spiritual convictions - none. How they think is unbiblical, and very often ungodly. That is exactly why they have no meaningful intentions of responding to what God commands. I do not know about you as a believer, but when I read something that is in the imperative mood, it gets my attention. This is not like playing Monopoly with play money. This is what composes the Christian life, and not to take God’s injunctions seriously is a grave mistake for any believer. We always reap what we sow. For the average believer who is not really that committed to the Scriptures, this is probably a complete paradigm shift and change for them. This is something that has to become his deep belief and his unwavering conviction, or he will find God constantly resisting him.

Just at a personal level, when we know that God is commanding that we live a certain way, commanding that we have a certain attitude and perspective on our life, at that point we individually have to make a decision. No Christian gets an exemption from making this decision. There has to be some spiritual resolution about what they are deciding to do. They can remain as indifferent as they may choose, but in the end God will hold them accountable for ignoring His Word. The decision is simple – will I submit my life fully to what I know is God’s perfect will for my life. How simple is that! What we are studying is God’s perfect will for our life – to stop speaking evil of people if that is what we are doing, and to stop being deceitful in what we tell people if that is what we are doing.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Precept Austin. n.d. <http://www.preceptaustin.org>.

Strong, James. *The New Strong's Expanded Dictionary of Bible Words*. Nashville, Tennessee: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2001.